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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

MANAGEMENT ADVISORY GROUP

25 MAR 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Executive Director

SUBJECT: Recommendation on Lengthening the Employee Probationary Period

CIA officers enjoy, in fact if not in theory, virtually unparalleled job security. They do not face the service officers' maximum time-in-grade hurdles nor the periodic competitive weeding out FSO's undergo.

There is one time only in his career when the inept CIA employee faces any real prospect of discharge: during his first or probationary year. Having survived 365 days, he is safe against all but the grossest offenses against security, decorum, or the law.

25X1 ? The Agency, traditionally very chary of exercising the DCI's statutory authority to make summary dismissals, has only proved willing to discharge the inept or miscast employee during his probationary year. In the last five years an average [redacted] new employees) were so separated each year. In contrast, virtually none were discharged during this five years after their probationary periods had been completed.

The Agency seems content, and perhaps is morally obligated, to carry to retirement eligibility the formerly able officer who peaked after 15 years and is coasting. It correctly feels no similar obligations to the new officer who usually has minimal family obligations and a minuscule investment of tenure in his intelligence career.

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Despite the best of screening aids, hiring mistakes are inevitable. Many new employees themselves recognize mistaken career choices, and the greatest percentage of resignations in Agency professional ranks occur during the first five years of employment.

The Agency gives itself only a year to recognize and correct such hiring mistakes. MAG believes this time is clearly too short. CT's are still in training status when the year has expired (and are often receiving protective performance evaluations and "extra help" from their counselors.) PTP officers are still busily indexing documents in RID and dreaming of a future CS career. CS careerists can be evaluated fully only on their field performance, and few are lucky enough to escape desk servitude within a year.

MAG finds cumbersome, unnecessary, and possibly disadvantageous the suggestion of hiring new employees under contract. The paperwork is unnecessary, and the Agency's primary recruiting theme - "a career in intelligence" - becomes a bit hollow when followed by a contract offer with the standard 30-day notice clause. Adoption of such a practice would undoubtedly put us at a hiring disadvantage.

The contract suggestion rests in fact on recognition that Agency management has grown accustomed to letting contracts lapse but has shied away from firing staffers. It is thus in essence a dodge to circumvent traditional attitudes and practices.

Why not, instead, change practice? There is no statutory bar to CIA's setting any probationary period it wishes for new employees. MAG advocates adopting a five-year probationary period, with rigorous, competitive weeding-out hazards to be faced at the end of the third and fifth years.

This proposal parallels roughly the Macomber task force recommendations for fairly ruthless competitive selection out of less promising junior FSO's. It assumes that marginality can be detected fairly early in a career. (There is good

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evidence for this, in, among other places, the results of the CS evaluation panels.) It assumes that surgery is better and more humane early in a career than later. It holds the promise of fewer career misfits and of fewer future cuts in the established officer corps. It permits us to risk a greater infusion of new blood.

MAG advocates competitive ranking of new employees in each directorate and the automatic discharge at the end of three years of the lowest 10% and at the end of five years of another 5%. (There is nothing sacrosanct about the percentage cuts recommended but we think their logic can be supported. The CS Evaluation Boards are having little difficulty identifying a marginal 5% at each grade among more senior officers and we think the rationale of a probationary period argues for more rigorous pruning than at mid-career.)


We suggest this procedure because the firing decision is always a painful one. No "sensible" supervisor wants to document the record, write the fateful recommendation, nor face down an irate employee. It is easier to try to palm off a marginal employee on another shop. The fixed percentage requirement avoids all this and ensures that the non-competitive officer is impartially identified and acted against. The two-stage procedure should permit some career experimentation and the rehabilitation of employees possibly miscast in one directorate but entirely competitive in another.

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TO	NAME AND ADDRESS	DATE	INITIALS
1	Director of Personnel Rm 5E56, Hqs		
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	ACTION	DIRECT REPLY	PREPARE REPLY
	APPROVAL	DISPATCH	RECOMMENDATION
	COMMENT	FILE	RETURN
	CONCURRENCE	INFORMATION	SIGNATURE
Remarks:			
Harry -			
We've sent a copy of the attached to DTR also.			
 Robert S. Wattles			
Att DD/S 71-1086			
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FROM: NAME, ADDRESS AND PHONE NO.			DATE
Assistant Deputy Director for Support 7D18, Hqs			22 MAR 1971
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ACTION	DIRECT REPLY	PREPARE REPLY	
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COMMENT	FILE	RETURN	
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Remarks: <p style="text-align: center;">Please let me have your views on the attached MAG recommendation by 8 April.</p> <div style="text-align: right; margin-top: 20px;">  LKW </div>			
FOLD HERE TO RETURN TO SENDER			
FROM: NAME, ADDRESS AND PHONE NO.			DATE
Executive Director-Comptroller			6 MAR 1970
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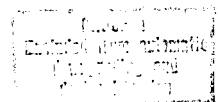
7 APR 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director for Support

SUBJECT : Recommendation on Lengthening the Employee Probationary Period

REFERENCE : Memo for ExDir-Compt fr MAG dtd 25 March 1971, same subject

1. We do not agree with the recommendation that the employee probationary period be lengthened. Nor do we believe that an arbitrary number of employees should be separated at the end of three- and five-year periods.
2. The MAG recommendation rests on assumptions about the nature of the work force and Agency management which are highly questionable and, if implemented as presented, could have a seriously adverse effect upon professional recruitment and the morale of our young professionals.
3. MAG's first assumption seems to be that we need a mandatory weeding out of 14 to 15% of new professionals in a five-year period. Add to this a certain number of professional employees who will go each year through normal attrition--currently at an all-time low of 5.6% per year--and we could conceivably encounter an unacceptable loss rate. Other assumptions or implications which we question include:
 - a. Present recruitment and selection procedures are wrong about 15% of the time; possibly so, but we are not prepared to grant it.
 - b. Agency management lacks the courage to identify and eliminate misfits; and "the fixed percentage requirement avoids all this and ensures that the non-competitive officer is impartially identified and acted against." We do not concede the first point, and the track record in the "701" and other ranking exercises suggests at least a reasonable doubt as to the second.
4. On the positive side, we do agree that our career selection process must be improved. We have available the policies, regulations and procedures which can accomplish the MAG objectives and can achieve them within an existing framework. As you know from our discussions of this subject, we do not believe these important screening procedures have been used adequately and we are well along in our planning to improve the effectiveness of this program.



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5. The policies and procedures which govern the conversion of Career Provisional appointees to Career Employee status are formalized in [] and have not been changed since they were approved by the DCI in September 1961. At that time the Director announced that they were intended to strengthen existing career concepts and to foster the continuing evolution of a strong Career Service in the Agency. There is no doubt that our practices since then have fallen short of this intent to establish a real distinction between Career Provisional and Career Employee status. For example, of approximately [] employees who completed three years in Career Provisional status and were considered for Career Employee status during the last three calendar years, all but 49 were converted to Career Employee status and action on those was deferred. None were terminated. Although no statistics have been kept on resignations related to career selection activities, the Chief, Special Activities Staff confirms our impression that only a few employees leave the Agency as the result of career selection screening.

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6. Although the basic concepts in [] are essentially sound, there is evident need to strengthen the whole career selection operation as a management tool and to make the prospect of conversion to Career Employee status of greater significance to the individuals concerned. It is also apparent that we must depend for the most part upon psychological and attitudinal changes to accomplish these improvements. From our review and discussions with the OGC and others, we conclude that certain actions would improve the career selection process significantly. Some months ago, in anticipation of the increased emphasis we plan to give to the conversion to career status at the end of the three-year provisional period, we added an appropriate statement in the remarks section of our Form 1150 (see Tab A). We have also prepared a list of other actions which are almost but not yet quite ready to be forwarded for your approval. We have attached this list as Tab B, but without the supporting documentation, only to provide assurance to the MAG that we are serious about improving the career selection process at the end of the three-year provisional period.

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/s/Harry B. Fisher

Harry B. Fisher
Director of Personnel

Atts: 2

Distribution:

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OD/Pers/HBFisher:djp (6 Apr 71)

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A. Revise [] as proposed in Tab A. This would emphasize the importance of the entire three-year provisional period as a screening process. It would also clarify the special meaning of the first year trial period and the delegation of authority to the Director of Personnel to affect separation of employees during that period.

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B. Revise [] as proposed in Tab B to require that Fitness Reports be prepared annually for all employees in Career Provisional status on their completion of 9, 24, and 33 months of service. The change would also require that all such reports contain a specific statement as to:

- (1) the employee's suitability for continued service; and,
- (2) his potential for conversion to Career Employee status.

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C. Revise [] as proposed in Tab C to cover the delegation of authority to the Director of Personnel to terminate those employees who fail to satisfactorily complete the initial one-year trial period.

D. Publish an OPM as proposed in Tab D announcing the involvement of the central Office of Personnel substantively in the career selection process by having the appropriate placement officers of the Staff Personnel Division

- (1) review the Fitness Reports of all Career Provisional employees; and,
- (2) personally discuss performance, work attitudes, and career interests with those Career Provisional employees who are available for interview each year and as appropriate with the supervisory and Career Service officials concerned.

E. As soon as practicable arrange for Fitness Reports and Forms 1150 prepared on Career Provisional Employees to be recorded on paper of a distinctive color in order to further highlight the distinction between Career Provisional and Career Employee status.

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30 March 1971

Mr. Fisher:

Suggest you discuss at the 4 o'clock today as we have a suspense to Colonel White of 8 April.

Attached memo deals with lengthening the employee probationary period. However, the title may be a little misleading as it covers other items; for instance, MAG is not for contract for new employees. I agree--they put their finger on it when they say adoption would put us at a hiring disadvantage.

Some of the rest of this memo has a degree of "off with their heads" that bothers me a little. They propose a five-year period of probation--while I agree wholeheartedly one year is too little, I believe five years is too long to keep the ax over someone's head.

MAG advocates competitive ranking of new employees in each Directorate and the automatic discharge at the end of three years of the lowest 10 percent and at the end of five years of the lowest five percent. This bothers me a little and presupposes that the lowest 10 percent are going to be marginal employees. I suppose we could build in protections that if they are still obviously good employees we don't fire them, but let's give this one some thought.

There is a harkening back to State in this paper and we should ask ourselves the question are State's people any better or as good as ours because of their methods?

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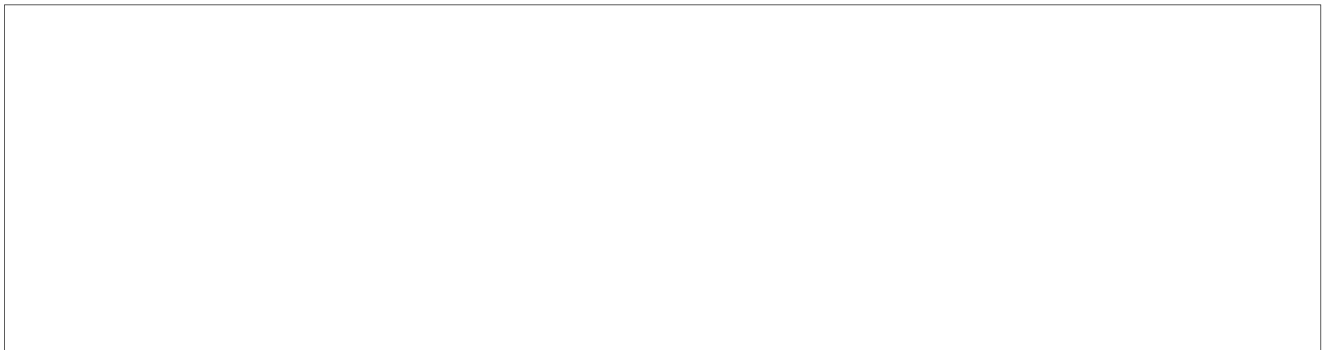
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31 March 1971

Mr. Fisher:

I don't like this recommendation on lengthening the employee probationary period. We don't need it; it rests on assumptions about the nature of both the professional work force and Agency management which are highly questionable; and if implemented as presented, could have a seriously adverse effect upon professional recruitment.

We don't need it because we already have available the policies, regulations and procedures which can accomplish the MAG objectives, and can achieve them within a framework which is already established and accepted. We have a three-year period within which to evaluate and screen new employees; a decision to use it would seem to be the preferable next step.



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Other assumptions or implications which I question include:

- a. Present recruitment and selection procedures are wrong about 15% of the time; possibly so, but I am not prepared to grant it.
- b. Agency management lacks the courage to identify and eliminate misfits; and "the fixed percentage requirement avoids all this and ensures that the non-competitive officer is impartially identified and acted against." I doubt that Agency management will concede the first point, and the track record in the "701" and other ranking exercises suggests at least a reasonable doubt as to the second.
- c. The comparison with State implies a degree of superiority in their system which I do not believe to exist. In the first place, our systems are not comparable in any major respects, and to the extent that they are becoming more so in method and objectives,

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we find that State is coming around more and more to our way of doing things, particularly in the areas of recruitment and employee utilization. Overlooked also is the historical fact that the levels of both FSO input and selection out are determined more by the state of the budget than by qualitative considerations.

The Agency continues to attract a great many qualified people, but we cannot assume that outstanding professionals in indefinite supply will always be available. A five-year probationary period, carrying some slight implication of a "get the rascals out" attitude on the part of Agency management, could dampen the interest of a good many desirable candidates.



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MEMORANDUM FOR:

SUBJECT : Provisional Employee FR Monitoring System

In order to establish a system to monitor employee evaluation during the three-year provisional period, the basic format for the Fitness Report control roster can be used with the two following additions:

1. a parameter which could incorporate two additional reporting periods of ~~10~~²⁴ and 33 months; and,
2. a master print-out of those employees who are in provisional status and their Fitness Report due date for use by SPD in monitoring the system.

Any studies conducted against the data currently contained in the Fitness Report control roster could presumably be directed toward the provisional employee group.

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